

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE BLOGGERS ROUNDTABLE WITH
BRIGADIER GENERAL MARK BROWN, PROGRAM EXECUTIVE OFFICER
SOLDIER,
AND BRIGADIER GENERAL TONY CUCOLO, CHIEF OF ARMY PUBLIC
AFFAIRS
(VIA TELECONFERENCE)

SUBJECT: BODY ARMOR

MODERATOR: TIM KILBRIDE, NEW MEDIA PRODUCER WITH THE OFFICE
OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE, PUBLIC AFFAIRS

LOCATION: THE PENTAGON, ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA

DATE: MONDAY, MAY 21, 2007

.STX

(C) COPYRIGHT 2007, FEDERAL NEWS SERVICE, INC., 1000 VERMONT
AVE.
NW; 5TH FLOOR; WASHINGTON, DC - 20005, USA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.
ANY REPRODUCTION, REDISTRIBUTION OR RETRANSMISSION IS
EXPRESSLY PROHIBITED.

UNAUTHORIZED REPRODUCTION, REDISTRIBUTION OR
RETRANSMISSION CONSTITUTES A MISAPPROPRIATION UNDER
APPLICABLE UNFAIR COMPETITION LAW, AND FEDERAL NEWS SERVICE,
INC. RESERVES THE RIGHT TO PURSUE ALL REMEDIES AVAILABLE TO IT IN
RESPECT TO SUCH MISAPPROPRIATION.

FEDERAL NEWS SERVICE, INC. IS A PRIVATE FIRM AND IS NOT
AFFILIATED WITH THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT. NO COPYRIGHT IS
CLAIMED AS TO ANY PART OF THE ORIGINAL WORK PREPARED BY A
UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT OFFICER OR EMPLOYEE AS PART OF THAT
PERSON'S OFFICIAL DUTIES.

FOR INFORMATION ON SUBSCRIBING TO FNS, PLEASE CALL JACK
GRAEME AT 202-347-1400.

THIS IS A RUSH TRANSCRIPT.

(Note: Please refer to www.defendamerica.mil for more information.)

MR. KILBRIDE: I'd like to welcome you all to the Department of Defense bloggers roundtable for Monday, May 21st, 2007.

My name is Tim Kilbride. I'm a new media producer with the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Public Affairs. I'll be moderating today's call.

We're honored to have as our guest Brigadier General Mark Brown, Program Executive Officer Soldier. And Paul, I might ask you to repeat General Cucolo's information.

Just a note to the bloggers online today: Please state your name and organization when asking questions.

And Generals, I'll turn it over to you if you have any opening statements and we can move to questions and answers after that.

MR. : And just for those for the record, it would be Brigadier General Tony Cucolo -- C-u-c-o-l-o -- chief of Army Public Affairs, sir.

GEN. CUCOLO: And also with us -- with Brigadier General Brown from PEO Soldier -- and PEO stands for?

MR. : Program Executive Office.

GEN. CUCOLO: Sorry. All things to do with outfitting and the kitting the individual soldier is Sergeant Major Coleman -- (off mike) -- four combat tour events. Also, two of those four combat tours to Iraq. And so the Sergeant Major's here also if you want to put questions towards him.

Again, I'm Tony Cucolo. I'm chief of Public Affairs. I am -- and doesn't matter how many bloggers we talk to, even if it's just one, it's a good thing. We're looking to reach the new media as much as we can and so I look forward to these types of things in the future.

Our purpose today, ladies and gentlemen present, the bottom line is we feel that it's important to clarify, give some context and certainly present facts about the body armor issue, primarily because of the two NBC news pieces -- on Thursday and one Sunday -- which from a public affairs point of view, we are most concerned that it might have shaken the confidence in the current body armor being worn soldiers in combat -- shaken the confidence of spouses and parents of those soldiers.

And so what we'll do is I'll turn it over to Brigadier General Mark Brown. He'll talk briefly and then we'll just open it up to questions.

So, Mark.

GEN. BROWN: First of all, this is General Mark Brown. I would like to thank you all for taking the time to be here today. I would like to get to you ground truth and get some facts out to you so that we can put some texture and context to these recent news reports.

The first thing I would tell you is that force protection is the number one priority of the U.S. Army. And as such, we spare no effort or spare no expense to try to chase the top levels of force protection available technologically and under current off-the-shelf methods.

The things that I would like you to know before I open it up to your questions are that force protection, too, is not just about body armor. It is an overlapping series of protections that we give to the soldier as a system that almost work in conjunction with the body armor. And the soldier as a system -- we have about 400 programs that we manage that all must work in conjunction with each other. And we can talk in more detail about that if you would like.

Today we have the best body armor in the world bar none. It is live-fire tested. It is proven in combat. Even the opening shot of the NBC news article on Thursday, Friday and Sunday night showed a soldier taking a hit from a jihadist round wearing Interceptor body armor. The soldier was knocked over by the impact of the concussion. He got up, fired, maneuvered and then reengaged the enemy. So one picture is worth a thousand words. That should have been quite impressive right there.

Second, there is more than one set of body armor in theater for every soldier. Third, I have all the funding, all the money and the leadership I need to pursue development, procurement, acquisition, sustainment of body armor. And third, even though we know we know we have -- oh, fourth: Even though we know we have the best body armor in the world, we are never satisfied with our status quo nor resting on our laurels. We are always researching for the next best thing. And when we find it, to borrow a phrase from Lee Iacocca, "We buy it."

The range of research (grows ?) everything from basic research, the discovery of new knowledge such as nanotechnologies to advanced development to engineering development to off-the-shelf. We have three soldier-protection demonstrations at Fort Benning a year, under the auspices of the commanding general of the U.S. Army Infantry Center, Major General Walt Watchekowski (sp). I have an up and running funded soldier enhancement program or system enhancement program where we either improve our existing systems, or we can buy an off-the-shelf product and improve it so it meets our requirements.

But the bottom line is, the U.S. Army soldier of today is the best-equipped soldier not only in history -- but in the history of the U.S. Army and the history of the world and we're very proud of that. But we'll always keep trying to make it better.

So with that opening statement, I will take your questions and answer your specific interests.

Q General Brown, it's Mark Finkelstein from NewsBusters. And I very much appreciate your speaking with us today.

I've seen over the last few days at least three different segments various on MSNBC and NBC shows -- I saw one just this morning on "The Today Show." I'm not sure if it's a repeat of something that had previously aired. This one showed tests that were being done on Dragon Skin versus Interceptor at a lab in Germany and the tests were witnessed by retired General Downing and by a former Pentagon tester. I wonder if you've had a chance to see that segment and whether you have any comments on it.

General Downing is shown saying that he thought the tests were fair and whereas, as you suggest, the Interceptor was found to be very effective, at least in these tests the Dragon Skin was found to be somewhat more effective.

GEN. BROWN: Well, I'm very glad you asked that question. This will take awhile to answer this question.

But General Downing -- retired General Downey -- retired in 1996. He is a mentor and adviser of mine. He is on my senior advisory panel. We meet regularly. He has never once told me that he thought that there was something better out there than Interceptor body armor or that I ought to look into it.

The test that was witnessed on -- now he's a great American, too. I mean, he's done more for this country than the country could ever repay, but he is not current in technical body armor information at this time. In fact, after NBC did their interview, we went back to him and gave him the briefing on the current state of the live-fire testing of Dragon Skin body armor and his response was, and I quote, "I hope I have not inadvertently poured fuel onto the fire." Unquote.

Further, when I queried him I said, "Sir, so where exactly did NBC get the supposed the SAPI body armor plates for this live-fire test?" And he said, and I quote: "We got it right off of your production line from your producer in Canada." Unquote. Then I went back to him. I said, "Sir, that's very interesting. But you know, we do not have a producer in Canada." And 24 hours later he came back and recanted and said, "Oh, we did not get that from your producer in Canada." But he would not tell me where they got it from. And unlike the report at NBC, NBC has not given us any of the testing data. So you know, what you were seeing on that show and on that clip probably made for good television, but we do not know the conditions. We do not know the threats. We do not know what they were firing at, ranges, or angles -- (inaudible) -- muzzle velocities -- all the technical data that goes into a test.

Also, NBC, I believe, probably paid for that test. So you know, what is the standard of confidence on a test that NBC paid for to support their story? Also, I think

the official you're referring to is the Honorable Phil Coyle. He retired in 2000, I believe it was -- maybe 2001. And he also has not remained current in live-fire body armor.

GEN. CUCOLO: This is Cucolo chiming in. Again, I just want to reinforce: General Downing is a great American. I worked with him right after 9/11 when he was called in as an adviser of the National Security Council. He's incredible. If you go back and read the transcript, or watch him and listen to what he says, he caveats the heck out of his comments.

What I mean, for example: "Well, Lisa" -- I don't know if this is an exact quote, forgive me -- "Well, Lisa, this is a limited test." So I believe he tried to characterize it properly in his comments.

GEN. BROWN: He did -- this is General Brown again. He did caveat that heavily. And I want to emphasize that he is a senior adviser of mine and a mentor -- and a very valued one at that. And I don't think the country could ever repay him for the service he has rendered to the nation. But and he is also on NBC's payroll.

Q This is Andrew Lubany (ph) with U.S. -- (inaudible) -- General. I appreciate you taking the time to speak to us.

Simple question, because I saw the piece on NBC and I read the article last night on MSNBC: Why not do the test? You know, take the Dragon Skin, take the Interceptor and do it your way, which -- and then if it's not as good, it's not as good. That would put everything to bed -- that would put everything to rest, I mean.

GEN. BROWN: Well, that's an excellent question. And what did not come across from that article -- and in fact, the Army has conducted four tests of Pinnacle Dragon Skin. The most recent of which was conducted from May 16 to May 19 at H.P. White Laboratories, one of two national Institutes of Justice certified ballistic testing labs in the United States.

We generally don't talk about test protocols in the public. We generally don't talk about our vulnerabilities and our counters or these vulnerabilities in public because we believe that informs a very media savvy and Internet savvy al Qaeda/Hamas/Hezbollah, et cetera; however, there's a balance to be struck and we think that the NBC reporting tipped the balance in favor of we had to go public in order to support the soldiers confidence in their equipment, but moreover, their families -- spouses, children, moms and dads -- confidence in the soldiers equipment that they indeed have the best in the world.

Q Would it be possible to get on one -- I assume you do tours over here with the Marine Corps -- but would it be possible to turn around and rent a private jet, go to the NBC people -- (inaudible).

GEN. BROWN: Let me recount the chronology of events on the -- Tony -- you've always got -- do you want to comment?

GEN. CUCOLO: An excellent discussion about -- I'm sorry. I've had a conversation over you all with Mark Brown. An excellent discussion this morning about the Army acquisition executive issues involved in doing this. It's difficult. We are in a difficult position to say, hey, we're going to do a side-by-side.

If we had another test -- now look, this is a grunt public affairs officer talking to you now -- if we did another test, we would have to consider opening it up, I think, to competitors, to all competitors and not just -- I think quite frankly, if we're going to spend taxpayer money -- and these tests are expensive -- and if we're going to do that then we would want to open it up to not just a Pinnacle product, but to others.

That is not in the works right now to do that.

Q (Off mike.)

GEN. BROWN: Let me address that for you. We test to a standard. There are six body armor producers that are currently under the employ of the United States Army. Every single one of them exceeded the standard. The standard is a series of test shots under both ambient conditions and under the harshest of environmental conditions. And everyone of the six to date passed every single test with no failures. It's a sudden death playoff. One failure is failure.

We tested Pinnacle SOB-3000 Dragon Skin to the same standard and it failed on 13 of 48 shots. It cost us a quarter-of-a-million dollars to do that, which I took out of my program fund. And the cost of a set of body armor is about \$3,100. So that's -- so you divide 3,100 into a quarter million and that's the number of Interceptor body armors I could have bought for that amount of money. The cost of a rifle is about \$1,100. I could have bought that many rifles.

We've had a long series of tests -- and let me give you a chronology of events. So I hope I'm on tape or I hope you're copying -- but we did a series of preliminary tests leading up to the test that was conducted when I -- the day after I took over as the Program Executive Officer for Soldiers. I took over on 15 May '06 as Program Executive Officer Soldier. The final test we conducted on Dragon Skin -- and Dragon Skin has not re-approached us with a product improvement -- never competed in a full and open competition, one of which is on the street right now -- lasted from 16 to 19 May. That's the test where they failed catastrophically. Thirteen out of 48 complete penetrations under a variety of conditions, including room temperature.

Q May of?

GEN. BROWN: May of 2006, right.

Now, the first test we conducted was a preliminary test -- what they call a limited test at the H.P. White Laboratories in Maryland in May of '04. That was well before my arrival. And they basically failed that test. Then from July to December of '05, a test was conducted at the Army Test and Evaluation Command in Maryland. Again, Dragon Skin -- the test results were inconclusive. In both of those cases we encouraged Pinnacle to go back to the drawing board and try to correct their shortcomings.

Finally, in February of '06, Dragon Skin failed an Air Force ballistic testing that was conducted under the auspices of the Army Test Evaluation Command. Then in March '06 is when we issued the safety-of-use message to the field. My predecessor, Brigadier General James Moran, put that safety-of-use message up the chain of command, because there were reports that soldiers and their families were starting to collect money to buy other armor solutions other than Interceptor body armor. And we wanted to ensure that the soldiers had the highest level of protection possible. So they issued safety-of-use message in March of '06 -- again, prior to my arrival as PEO. And I arrived on 15 May and we conducted our last test from 16 to 19 May of '06 and at that time is when they had this most recent failure.

Now, Pinnacle/Dragon Skin has never come back and requested a further test. They have never proffered a product improved. They have never competed in a full and open competition. So if they've got something better, we're interested in it.

But you know, I go to do all the --

Q How much money has Pinnacle received from --

GEN. BROWN: A quarter of a million dollars to do this testing. Oh, no. I'm sorry.

GEN. CUCOLO: We have actually Pinnacle -- haven't we funded Pinnacle to a degree?

GEN. BROWN: Oh, yes. It was developmental testing is what it was.

Q How much?

GEN. BROWN: The latest one was quarter-of-a-million dollars.

Q Can you give us an -- (off mike.)

GEN. BROWN: I'll have to research that and get you an accurate answer.

Q (Off mike) -- why haven't you approached for a retesting? I would put it on the back of them, frankly.

GEN. BROWN: Okay. Let me -- I'd like to shift gears a little bit and say, you know, also with body armor it is about the bullet, but it's not all about the bullet. It also has to cover the maximum amount of area. It also has to be light enough for the soldier to use. And it has to work in conjunction with all the other soldier equipment.

The test article that we're talking about here -- the Pinnacle SOB-3000 Dragon Skin -- weighs 47 pounds. The Interceptor body armor equivalent weighs 28 pounds. It's well known that the soldier architecture is the human body. That human architecture is not changeable. The human body is what it is. And you are not -- we know through long tests and experience that you should not load -- although we violate it occasionally -- you should not load up the human body with more than one-third of their body weight for extended periods of time. For a 150-pound soldier, a 47-pound vest would be the entire one-third of their body weight, not including helmet, rifle, boots, food, ammunition, water, night sights and any other mission gear that we want to load those soldiers up with.

And if you want to understand what I'm talking about, Sergeant Major Coleman may have something that he wants to advise on that. Now, Sergeant Major Coleman -- I hired him to be my direct adviser. He works directly for me. He has four combat tours. He started with the 82nd in Operation Just Cause in Panama. He was with the -- he went to Operation Desert Storm and he's had two tours in Iraq -- OEF1 and OEF4 -- with the 82nd and the 101st Airborne Air Assault. So he's here if you want to ask him about the usability or the human factor.

SERGEANT COLEMAN: (Off mike.)

MR. KILBRIDE: Actually, Mark -- if I could interrupt you for a second. Why don't you give Charlie some -- (inaudible).

GEN. BROWN: I didn't realize we had another -- (inaudible) -- on the line.

MR. KILBRIDE: Okay.

Q Actually most of my questions have already been answered.

MR. KILBRIDE: All right.

Mark, go ahead.

Q General Brown, as you know, Vice President Cheney recently visited Baghdad. And that was before these NBC reports had gone public -- at least as far as I knew about them. But I recall just watching footage of Vice President Cheney as I think he was debarking from a helicopter in the Baghdad area. And I remember thinking at the time to myself, huh, that's funny. It doesn't look like he's wearing kind of standard -- you know, what I was familiar with as body armor. It was kind of a more yellowish color.

And again, this is before the NBC stories. But now looking back on it, I find myself saying, I wonder what Vice President Cheney was wearing.

Do you know, if you can tell me, what kind of body armor the vice president was wearing? Because again, by the color of it, it almost -- now retrospectively -- it strikes me that it's possibly -- he might have been wearing Dragon Skin himself. Do you know the answer or can you get it?

GEN. BROWN: I have not seen the particular photo that you refer to. But the carriers for body armor come in different colors and patterns. I can you tell you with certainty that we recently -- prior to this story breaking -- issued the secretary of Defense Gates interceptor body armor. Prior to this story breaking, recently we issued Admiral Fallon -- the combatant commander of the Central Command -- Interceptor body armor. They wear the same thing that the soldier wears.

That safety-of-use message applies to everybody in theater. In fact, that safety-of-use message was put out and sanctioned by the U.S. Central Command. I think the Tank Automotive Command is the one that drafted it and sent it forward, but it was put out in theater by U.S. Central Command.

Q Can I follow up on that? Would it be possible to get an answer on my question? And also, again, I see to recall when Senator McCain visited the market in Baghdad, I seem to have a similar recollection.

GEN. BROWN: What I would say about that is that when I was a little boy my dad and my granddad used tell me to use the right tool for the job. And when you're an infantryman walking down the street of Fallujah or Tall Afar, you're going in full battle rattle, because you know the bad guys are out there and they're going to shoot at you.

If you're the vice president or the secretary of State, you're going into an area that has already been cleared and secured and the threat level is somewhat lower. And then you have the challenge of interacting with dignitaries, such as sheiks and other folks, that they're not wearing body armor and so you can't insult them.

So the missions are different. You use the right tool for the job. An infantry trooper or a cavalry scout cruising down the street of Sadr City knows he's going in harm's way. That is not a cleared area. So I think there are other governmental agencies that buy different body armor solutions, but their requirements are nowhere near as stringent as the U.S. Army or the U.S. Marine Corps.

Q So you're suggesting that it's possible that in fact the vice president was wearing some lighter form of body armor.

GEN. BROWN: I simply do not know.

Q This is -- (inaudible) -- Anderson (sp) with (CN Media ?).

My question is, what about the -- from the MSNBC or CNBC story -- the forward-deployed CIA team that was doing very similar things to what an Army soldier would be doing and they had -- did you get anything from that, that they had the Pinnacle armor?

GEN. BROWN: My recommendation would be that you contact the Central Intelligence Agency and ask them. But I can tell you that I don't -- from what I would deduce -- that the mission requirements for a clandestine or covert agent who is looking for stealth and moving around in the shadows would not be the same as a Marine or an infantryman going down range in Kirkuk.

MR. KILBRIDE: You've got about two minutes left, General. It's up to you if you'd like to take another question or have any closing statement.

GEN. BROWN: I'll take one more question and make a closing statement.

MR. KILBRIDE: All right.

Q Following up on a one question -- (inaudible) -- couple of generals who wore Dragon Skin, or was NBC -- (off mike) -- on that one also?

GEN. BROWN: Well, I'm glad you asked that question, because it is my impression that they denigrated the integrity of those leaders. And in fact, if you look very closely in NBC's own video graphic evidence, they showed one of those generals -- Lieutenant General Peter Chiarelli -- and he's moving into a meeting and he's peeling out of his body armor. And that body armor would be Interceptor body armor. So at least in that v-roll or that background footage he was wearing Interceptor body armor.

General Chiarelli informs me that the only time he didn't wear Interceptor body armor, which was one time, was when he was going to a social event at the home of a sheik. And to go in in full battle rattle would have been highly insulting to the host. And what he did was he wore concealable body armor underneath his shirt that would have stopped a small threat, small arms -- not something as aggressive as we protect with with Interceptor body armor. Bottom line was that he said that he never wears anything but Interceptor body armor.

Q Thank you.

MR. KILBRIDE: Okay.

If you want to give a closing statement, please go ahead.

GEN. BROWN: Okay. The closing statement I want to make is I think -- and I feel this every day -- that the American people should be very proud of the men and women serving in the U.S. armed forces. And I get that sensing as I move around the

country that the American people are proud and they always pat us on the back and encourage us. And those young men and women are the number one importance to us. And as such, force protection then becomes our number one priority.

You know, it is an issue of family for us, because Sergeant Major Coleman has a brother downrange right now. My director of Administration and Personnel has a son downrange right now. My director of the Rapid Fielding Initiative, Colonel Mike Bondheim (sp) has a son going downrange right now. In fact, 30 percent of general officers -- one-third of the general officers have a son or a daughter that is either in Iraq or Afghanistan or has been Iraq and Afghanistan. Some of those cases are very well known. So it is not just a job to us. It's personal. And so that's why we're going trying to get that ground truth out.

The bottom line is, we have the best armor in the world today bar none. It's live-fire tested. It's proven in combat. We have more than one for every soldier in theater. I have all the money and all the leadership support I need to make it happen and we're never satisfied with where we stand in the status quo. We're always looking for the next best thing and we've got a wide range of programs to pursue that next best thing.

So I appreciate you taking the time today and thank you very much.

MR. KILBRIDE: Thank you, General.

I'll just say in closing: Thank you everybody for your questions and comments. The Bloggers Roundtable program will be available online at defendamerica.mil for (downloadable ?) file, transcripts and a general biography. A related story will be written for American Force Press Service and posted on DefenseLink.mil. And if there are any questions about the program, please contact the Department of Defense New Media Team at bloggeroutreach@hq.afis.osd.mil.

Again, thank you Brigadier General Brown and all the bloggers. And that's it. Take care.

GEN. BROWN: Thank you, Tim.

@FC~END
@FL~